

Report

Thomas Stone National Historic Site

■ 1.0 Site Description

Thomas Stone National Historic Site (NHS) is a relatively new unit of the NPS. Originally created by congressional legislation in 1978, the site today encompasses a portion of Haberdeventure Plantation, the home of Thomas Stone, one of Maryland's four signers of the Declaration of Independence. Thomas Stone was a delegate to the Continental Congress from 1775-1778 and from 1783-1784. As a member of the Continental Congress, he served on the 13-member committee that drafted the country's first system of government under the Articles of Confederation.

Located in Charles County, Maryland approximately 25 miles south of Washington, DC, the 322-acre site contains the original five-part tidewater plantation house, as well as several outbuildings typical of an 18th and 19th century Maryland plantation. Although it was originally established in 1978, little development of the site took place until 1994. Work is still ongoing to provide adequate on-site parking areas and visitor pathways. The existing gravel surfaced parking area is able to accommodate approximately 20 vehicles.

The site officially opened to the public in the fall of 1997. Current operating hours are from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Wednesday through Sunday during the period September through May and daily during the period of June through August. The site is closed on December 25 and January 1. Annual visitation to the site in 1998 was only 3,034 persons. Anticipated visitation during 1999 is approximately 5,000 persons. Current visitation is primarily by local area residents. Little publicity has been created to date for the site. Efforts are just getting underway to encourage local school groups to visit the site.

Typical visitation is by small groups of visitors who arrive two to three in a single car. Typical duration of a visit is between one to two hours.

■ 2.0 Existing ATS

There is no existing internal Alternative Transportation Systems (ATS) service at this site. Similarly, there are no public or private ATS services that provide access to the site at this time.

■ 3.0 ATS Needs

Given the relatively remote, rural location of the site, and the low levels of current and anticipated future visitation, the NPS staff did not indicate any significant ATS needs. However, they did indicate their intention to acquire a small golf-cart-type vehicle to transport elderly and handicapped visitors from the new Visitor Center to the main plantation house and outbuildings.

■ 4.0 Basis of ATS Needs

The NPS staff described the main public access road to the site (Rose Hill Road) as being relatively narrow and curvy. In addition, increasing commuter use of this road was seen as having the potential to cause future conflicts with site visitor access.

Transit access to the site was seen as a very long-term future potential by the NPS staff. The view was expressed that this would only take place at such time as regional public transit service was provided to larger communities such as LaPlata in the U.S. Route 301 corridor.

■ 5.0 Bibliography

National Park Service, Thomas Stone National Historic Site Web site (<http://www.nps.gov/thst/>) Visited November 14, 1999.

■ 6.0 Persons Interviewed

John J. Donahue, Superintendent, Thomas Stone National Historic Site